



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
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Summary record of the 671st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 14 January 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Schöpp-Schilling (Vice-Chairperson)

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*Combined third and fourth periodic reports and fifth periodic report of
Paraguay*

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05-20954 (E)

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In the absence of the Chairperson, Ms. Schöpp-Schilling, Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (continued)

Combined third and fourth periodic reports and fifth periodic report of Paraguay (CEDAW/C/PAR/3-4, and CEDAW/C/PAR/5 and Corr. 1, CEDAW/PSWG/2005/I/CRP.1/Add.6 and CRP.2/Add.5)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Paraguay took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Argaña Mateu** (Paraguay), introducing her country's combined third and fourth periodic reports and fifth periodic report (CEDAW/C/PAR/3-4 and CEDAW/C/PAR/5) said that Paraguay's ratification of the Convention in 1986 had become the legal framework for gender equality in the country and inspired civil and constitutional reforms. The Optional Protocol to the Convention had been ratified in 2001. Implementing the Convention was no easy task given the legacy of decades of serious problems and ill-advised solutions. However, Paraguay was rising to the challenge in the conviction that it was through joint efforts, not ideologies or political affiliations, that the desired objective would be met.

3. She wished to focus on the main actions conducted by the Paraguayan Government, inaugurated in 2003, and by the Women's Bureau of the Office of the President of the Republic, the highest-ranking State body concerned with mainstreaming the gender perspective and non-discrimination against women in public policies. Progress had been made through consensus with political sectors, civil society and citizens and results were already being seen in terms of public policies, social achievements, institutional and legal reforms, and macroeconomic indicators. In line with guidelines, the report also included comments from the report of the Paraguayan Human Rights Coordination Unit (CODEHUPY), *Derechos Humanos en Paraguay 2004*.

4. Paraguay had made huge progress in the area of human rights, largely on the basis of its 1992 Constitution, which guaranteed equality and non-

discrimination for all citizens. In line with the Committee's general recommendations, Paraguay had amended its Civil Code, Labour Code, Electoral Code and Penal Code, which now defined sexual harassment and domestic violence as serious offences. It had also enacted legislation on adoption and on domestic violence. Women also benefited from the Childhood and Adolescence Code adopted in 2001, a new Agrarian Act and legislation modifying the pensions and retirement regime of the Social Provident Administration (IPS). At the international level, Paraguay had also ratified the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

5. Much progress had been made in strengthening gender mainstreaming, as reflected in the ratification of international instruments and platforms for action, the establishment of joint bodies and networks, the increase in data broken down by gender, geographical area and specific groups, and greater decentralization and social participation. The current administration of the Women's Bureau had initiated a plan for institutional modernization, reaffirming its role and defining policies for the implementation of the Second National Plan for Equal Opportunities for Men and Women for the period 2003 to 2007. In 2003, the Gender and Social Equity Committee of the House of Representatives had been set up which, together with the Equity, Gender and Social Development Committee of the Senate, ensured that draft legislation promoted equality and non-discrimination of women. Women's bureaux had also been set up in various ministries and in the Governor's Offices and Municipalities in the interior of the country with the aim of improving the situation of women, in particular through their participation in bodies of all kinds.

6. The Women's Bureau had also used communication strategies to raise awareness of gender equality and promote a less stereotypical image of women through all forms of media. In the same vein, it had also set up a project to produce radio broadcasts, in Guaraní and Spanish, aimed at equipping rural women living in the interior of the country to use the mass

media to raise awareness of women's rights. In 2005, the Women's Bureau hoped to broadcast the programme throughout the country, covering topics such as reproductive sexual health and women's employment in areas traditionally considered "masculine". It was also conducting a series of activities on policies aimed at compensation or inclusiveness which directly targeted victims of inequality.

7. Also in line with the Committee's recommendations, for the first time in 94 years — and only the second time in history — there was a woman judge on the Supreme Court. Important progress had also been made in the executive branch of Government, with women today heading key ministries and holding high-ranking posts in various State departments. In 2003, a woman Governor had also been elected in the Department of Concepción. The Office of the Public Defender was promoting actions to improve women's political participation and, working jointly with the Women's Bureau, had presented Congress with a bill which proposed increasing the minimum quota of women on candidate lists to 50 per cent. A public hearing had been held with women's organizations, political parties and public institutions, most of whom were in favour of the proposal. To date, the Gender and Social Equity Committee of the House of Representatives had issued two opinions, one in favour of a 50 per cent quota and the other in favour of 30 per cent.

8. The Supreme Tribunal of Electoral Justice had undertaken to make resources available for actions to promote gender equality and launched a campaign to encourage women to register on the National Civil Registry. In addition, the Women's Bureau had given priority to its work with women's prisons throughout the country, in particular by improving facilities. Significant progress had been made since the adoption of the Domestic Violence Act in 2000, even though there was still a degree of resistance by the bodies called upon to intervene. The Women's Bureau had undertaken a series of actions to promote the National Plan for the Prevention and Punishment of Violence Against Women and the National Network against Domestic Violence. According to records, the number of cases had increased every year so far. A review of the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act had pointed to the need to set up a single national registry for victims of violence in order properly to assess the

situation. Several ministries had also signed an agreement to incorporate the gender perspective into their work and improve inter-institutional coordination on the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act. In that context, a special emergency telephone number had been created for reporting domestic violence. Women today had many places to turn. Justices of the Peace throughout the country were responsible for receiving reports of domestic violence and protecting victims, while health centres and the police were receiving special training.

9. The General Education Act, which established equal access, gender equality and non-discrimination in education, had been a major step forward for formal education in Paraguay. The Ministry of Education and Culture, together with the Women's Bureau, had defined a public policy and set up a programme aimed at achieving gender equality. The National Programme for Equality of Opportunities and Outcomes for Women in Education (PRIOME) had also seen significant achievements, particularly in terms of gender mainstreaming. The Ministry had also adopted a National Plan on Illiteracy for men and women who had failed to complete their basic education. According to the 2002 census, the gap between men and women in terms of access to education and continued attendance was shrinking all the time. An important step in that regard had been the Ministry's decision to close the two remaining public colleges providing segregated education, in line with Paraguay's Constitution and the General Education Act.

10. One of the main challenges facing the Ministry of Education and Culture in terms of achieving gender equality in education was the eradication of sexual harassment, most of the victims of which were female pupils. In that regard, it had set up a free national service for reporting sexual harassment. As at April 2004, all of those teachers reported had been suspended and, if found guilty, would not be allowed to teach again. With regard to mainstreaming population- and poverty-related issues, in 2004, Paraguay had adhered to the declaration issued following the thirty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development, in which all the countries of Latin America had reiterated their commitment to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

11. In 2003, a new National Sexual and Reproductive Health Plan covering the period from 2003 to 2008 had

come into effect following far-reaching consultations with citizens. The National Council on Sexual and Reproductive Health had also been established to monitor implementation of the plan. Actions taken by the Ministry of Health included a “safe delivery” programme, the provision of free care for under-five-year-olds and pregnant women, a free pregnancy kit and a programme to train sexual and reproductive health monitors throughout the country. As a result, there had been a significant increase in the use of contraceptives and in the number of hospital births. The birth rate had also fallen significantly.

12. In 2004, women leaders had signed a Declaration of commitment on violence against women, women’s rights and education, HIV/AIDS among women, new forms of contraception for women and equal access to assistance. The Government had also set up an ad hoc inter-agency board to combat trafficking in persons, which in 2005 would launch a project to encourage the Government to develop the public policies needed to combat the phenomenon. The Women’s Bureau would also carry out a bilateral project with the Government of the United States, the activities of which included bringing legislation into line with international law and setting up a national network on trafficking in persons, a national helpline and centre for the reintegration of victims.

13. Paraguay was convinced that the implementation of the Convention was essential for the development of nations based on equality between men and women. The only way to achieve sustainable development was through hard work, dedication and shared responsibility. In that regard, her Government was fully committed to setting up a mechanism with civil society to monitor and provide information on the implementation of both the Convention and the Committee’s recommendations.

Articles 1 to 6

14. **Ms. Gabr**, referring to Paraguay’s response to question 1 by the Committee (CEDAW/PSWG/2005/I/CRP.2/Add.5), said that, while there was no harm in seeking the advice of international consultants when preparing reports, she hoped that in the future more use would be made of national machinery, particularly civil society. She welcomed Paraguay’s ratification of the Optional Protocol, but wished to know what measures had been taken since then to enable women to enjoy all their

rights under the Convention. Lastly, with regard to political participation, she would appreciate further clarification concerning the status of the bill that proposed increasing the minimum quota of women on candidate lists to 50 per cent.

15. **Ms. Manalo** said that she would be grateful for further clarification as to the State party’s understanding of the difference between the concepts of equality and gender equity. In its responses to the Committee’s list of issues and questions (CEDAW/PSWG/2005/I/CRP.2/Add.5), the State party had defined the concepts of discrimination and equity, but had not defined the concept of equality. She would also appreciate further clarification of the phrase “dichotomy of gender versus party”, which was used throughout the State party’s fifth periodic report (CEDAW/C/PAR/5). According to the responses to the list of issues and questions, the Convention formed part of Paraguay’s national legislation and could be invoked before the courts. She therefore wondered whether the State party could provide any information regarding cases in which the Convention had been invoked.

16. In its response to the Committee’s question 26, the State party had stated that Act No. 1600 on domestic violence addressed individuals who habitually committed acts of physical violence against another person living in the same home. Aside from the negative implications of the fact that the violence must be “habitual”, the response seemed to indicate that the pace of legal reform was not sufficiently rapid, and she would like to know exactly when the various proposals and initiatives to which the State party referred would become a reality. Lastly, she would appreciate more information as to how Paraguay disseminated knowledge of the Convention, and what measures were used to gauge the success of those measures.

17. **Ms. Pimentel**, noting that it was very important for Paraguay, as for other countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, to draw a clear distinction between the authority of the Church and of the State, said that efforts to ensure women’s participation in decisions about their lives were central to achieving legal and political progress. The Committee would therefore recommend that Paraguay take all measures necessary to protect women from any form of discrimination or restriction on religious grounds, within the context of the secular State and in accordance with the provisions of its Constitution on religious freedom.

18. **Mr. Flinterman**, noting that the Convention was part of Paraguay's national legislation, asked whether it would therefore prevail over subsequent legislation or might be superseded by such legislation. With respect to the Optional Protocol to the Convention, he asked what steps had been taken by the State party to spread awareness of its provisions within the legal profession, human rights groups and other organizations.

19. **Ms. Gnacadja** said that she would appreciate more information regarding the Childhood and Adolescence Code, and wished to know whether it had in fact been introduced into law, as indicated in the fifth periodic report. Moreover, Act No. 1600 on domestic violence seemed to bear the seeds of its own failure in requiring that the violence be "habitual". She would therefore like to know more about the State party's plans for amending the Act.

20. **Ms. Dairiam** said that, although Paraguay's efforts to promote women's advancement had produced encouraging results, de facto equality had not yet been achieved because of a lack of conceptual clarity regarding the principle of equality and non-discrimination, the failure to internalize that principle within all other mainstream plans, and the inadequacy of the methodologies used to apply the principle of equality and address the diverse contexts in which equality should be promoted. In particular, the State party did not appear to have developed a legal definition of discrimination, based on article 1 of the Convention. She wondered whether Paraguay had developed legal categories of the basis for discrimination, such as ethnicity, marital status or sexual orientation. Lastly, it would be useful to know the interrelationship between the National Plan for Equal Opportunities for Men and Women and the National Strategy to reduce Poverty and Inequality.

21. **Ms. Maiolo**, noting that Paraguay, like many other countries, faced cultural resistance to its efforts to promote women's equality, said that it must nevertheless ensure that its laws were strict and clear, and should notably amend those provisions of its Penal Code pertaining to domestic violence.

22. **Ms. Argaña Mateu** (Paraguay), responding to the Committee's questions, said that, in preparing its periodic reports, Paraguay had employed a domestic consultancy firm in order to gather information. The reports had been approved by the Women's Bureau and forwarded to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs for

submission to the Committee. Paraguay was aware that the concept of equality referred to equal treatment and opportunities for men and women, while the concept of equity referred to the same equal treatment and opportunities, adapted to specific characteristics or situations such as the gender, class or religion of certain groups, with a view to guaranteeing equal access. The phrase "dichotomy of gender versus party" referred in particular to situations where women in elected positions responded to the interests of their political bloc or partisan group, while not genuinely taking into account women's specific needs.

23. With respect to women's participation in political life, she said that, in 2004, the Women's Bureau had submitted a bill on reform of the Electoral Code, aimed at increasing women's participation in elected bodies. Public hearings had been held, involving legislators, representatives of political parties, leaders of local authorities and women's organizations, and the public had been informed through the communications media. As a result of that process, two opinions had been submitted for consideration by the Committee on Constitutional Affairs. A mechanism was being established to ensure follow-up, monitoring and dissemination of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, as well as compliance with the Committee's recommendations. Lastly, a deadline would be set for amending Act No. 1600 on domestic violence.

24. **Ms. García** (Paraguay) said that there were two legal remedies in Paraguay for cases of domestic violence: Act No. 1600 on domestic violence represented the civil remedy, while the Penal Code represented the criminal remedy. The Women's Bureau was working with women legal professionals to submit proposals to amend article 229 of the Code, because it provided for penalties only in cases where the violence was habitual and physical and was perpetrated against another person living in the same house. With respect to Act No. 1600, training had been provided to health centres and legal professionals, and aid had been given to victims of domestic violence, regardless of their marital status. Efforts had also been made to persuade Parliament to strengthen the Act.

25. Steps had been taken to disseminate awareness of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, including the holding of a press conference and the publication of a comprehensive brochure, and a special training course for legal professionals had also been introduced. Under

Paraguayan law, the Constitution was paramount, and was followed in turn by ratified conventions, special laws, resolutions and acts, or decrees. However, article 145 of the Constitution provided for a supranational legal order, which guaranteed the validity of certain decisions relating to human rights and other areas.

26. **Ms. Ferreira de Guanes** (Paraguay), addressing the implementation of the Convention, said that Paraguay had set up a Human Rights Coordination Unit that focused on gender issues. Although the gender perspective had been successfully mainstreamed in the executive and legislative branches, difficulties had been identified by the judiciary with respect to the implementation of international instruments, and there continued to be considerable resistance within the judiciary to their implementation. Act No. 1600 was a very important law, and its successful introduction had been the result of intensive lobbying by civil society and effective coordination by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with the Women's Bureau. Advocates of the Act had decided to focus on the civil remedy because the process of forcing change within the judiciary was very slow, and because the Act could be implemented rapidly and effectively. Although the law was still deficient in some respects, it was extremely well known around the country.

27. **Ms. Ferreira de Lopez** (Paraguay) noted that it was very difficult to amend Act No. 1600 on domestic violence because the vast majority of the country's Deputies were men, and there was still a considerable degree of male chauvinism, which represented a major obstacle to civil society's efforts to promote reform.

28. **Ms. Arocha Dominguez** recalled that, in 1996, the Committee had recommended that the State party should strengthen the political status and the economic and administrative aspects of the Women's Bureau. In view of the recent change of Government, she wished to know how the Bureau had achieved continuity in terms of, *inter alia*, human resources and leadership during the transition period. She also inquired about the criteria used by the Government to select the civil society organizations with which it maintained links and asked whether those organizations had been involved in the drafting of the report.

29. **Ms. Shin** welcomed the efforts undertaken in Paraguay to strengthen legislation on domestic violence. However, while punishing the perpetrators of

such violence was important, measures must also be implemented to correct their behaviour. Victim protection was also vital and, in that connection, she would be grateful to know whether the State party had set up any women's shelters or psychological assistance programmes. She stressed the need to train police officers, members of the judiciary, educators, medical practitioners and the media and pointed out that, since the police were often the first point of contact for victims of domestic violence, their conduct was particularly important. The Government must work closely with women's organizations to ascertain where the real problems lay in those areas.

30. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said that she wished to return to the issue of equality versus equity, which was more than just a question of terminology. Equality between women and men was not only a legal concept (*de jure*) but also a substantive one (*de facto*), requiring the implementation of practical measures to ensure its effectiveness. Equity, on the other hand, was a much more flexible construct, often linked to the issue of social justice and subject to interpretation. Its meaning could be cleverly and dangerously exploited by those who did not want real equality and, in that connection, she was concerned about the apparently indiscriminate use of the term in the State party's reports. She also expressed concern about the apparent leniency of penalties for extremely serious offences such as trafficking, the sexual abuse of minors and incest.

31. **Ms. Gaspard** said that it was difficult to judge the extent to which the Convention had been implemented in Paraguay. Indeed, the report suggested that the State party had not fully understood a number of its articles. Accordingly, she requested further information about the national machinery for gender equality and underlined the importance of providing that machinery with adequate human and financial resources. She expressed surprise that the State party had employed an external consultant to prepare its combined third and fourth periodic reports and wondered whether that meant that there were no suitably qualified individuals within the Government. Lastly, she echoed the concerns of previous speakers about the dangers of confusing equality and equity.

32. **Ms. Morvai** said that, according to the international community, trafficking in persons was the modern form of slavery. It should also be regarded as the modern form of colonization, since it consisted of

men from first-class nations using and abusing women and children from second-class nations and represented the eroticization of poverty and racism. All those involved, particularly those countries that provided clients, had a responsibility to speak out against such practices. In that connection, she wondered whether the Government of Paraguay had witnessed any political commitments on the part of developed nations to eradicate human trafficking and, if so, how those commitments had manifested themselves. She stressed that the developed countries had a moral and legal obligation to assist the developing countries to eradicate trafficking and inquired whether the Government was committed to obtaining such assistance.

33. **Ms. Šimonović** suggested that, in future, the State party's report and the Committee's concluding comments should be submitted to Parliament and disseminated throughout the country at all levels. She requested further clarification about the definition of discrimination against women in domestic legislation and, in view of the disturbing reference in the fifth periodic report to the "selling" of girls aged between 10 and 13, would be grateful for additional information about the frequency of such incidents and the penalties imposed on perpetrators. How did the Government plan to address the problem?

34. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** noted that the Government of Paraguay had taken a number of positive steps to penalize traffickers. However, the action taken focused primarily on the situation of children, and she therefore inquired how the Government intended to extend the scope of that action to include women. She also wished to know whether the State agencies responsible for implementing Law 1160/97 had adequate resources to carry out their duties in an effective manner, particularly since human trafficking tended to be a highly organized activity involving transnational criminal gangs. Lastly, given the crucial role of the media in society, it would be useful to know whether the draft law on sexist advertising had been adopted and, if so, what the effects of its adoption had been.

35. **Ms. Argaña Mateu** (Paraguay), replying to a number of questions about the national machinery for gender equality, recalled that the Women's Bureau of the Office of the President of the Republic had been established in 1992 and headed by the same Minister until the change of Government in August 2003. Under the new administration, and with a view to operating as

transparently as possible, the Women's Bureau had begun a process of reform and modernization. Efforts were being made to optimize the use of human and financial resources and to create a pluralistic, participatory and non-discriminatory working environment. In the interests of continuity, all the professional staff hired by the previous administration had been retained.

36. The new administration had decided to pursue the implementation of all the positive programmes developed by the previous Government, including the Second National Plan for Equal Opportunities for Men and Women for the period 2003 to 2007, which had been approved by Presidential Decree in March 2004. The Women's Bureau was responsible for implementing the provisions of the Plan in all sectors and was working in close collaboration with civil society. A series of workshops had been organized to raise awareness of the Plan among women from all backgrounds and particular emphasis had been placed on the needs of rural and indigenous women.

37. In addition, considerable inter-agency collaboration was taking place within the Government. For instance, the Women's Bureau, working in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Culture, had developed a national programme for equality in education, and efforts were also being made to mainstream a gender perspective into poverty-reduction policies. As far as the concepts of equality and equity were concerned, she informed the Committee that a mass media campaign, entitled "Iguales en todos" (Equal in Everything), had been launched with a view to promoting a culture of equality.

38. **Ms. Ferreira de Guanes** (Paraguay) acknowledged that Paraguay's Penal Code did not make adequate provision for the prevention of trafficking in children but pointed out that the members of the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR) had begun to cooperate in order to coordinate their efforts and bridge any legislative gaps. As a result of the economic crisis in Latin America, many women had attempted to find employment in Spain. Unfortunately, large numbers of them had been lured to Europe under false pretences and had become the unwitting victims of traffickers. The Paraguayan Embassy in Spain had been working to help affected women and, in addition, the Government was taking

steps to create employment opportunities for women in Paraguay.

39. **Ms. Arza de Arriola** (Paraguay) said that Paraguay's commitment to combating trafficking was evidenced by its recent ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. At the national level, the Government, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, had established an inter-agency board to combat trafficking and a project aimed specifically at women and children had been developed.

40. **Ms. Argaña Mateu** (Paraguay) said that the Women's Bureau of the Office of the President had established a national network of offices to provide educational, legal and counselling services to women. Four shelters had also been established for women victims of violence, who were provided with psychological legal counselling. Public awareness campaigns were being conducted on radio and television, in the written press and through the distribution of educational fliers in both the Spanish and Guaraní languages. The aim of the campaigns was to put an end to negative stereotypes of women in Paraguay, promote their participation in the political process and their access to economic resources, and end discrimination against them.

Articles 7 to 9

41. **Ms. Simms** said that she wished to comment briefly on a number of different issues. The eroticization and trafficking of women in Latin America and the Caribbean was bound up with the myth of the noble savage. It was important to remember, however, that the victims were frequently women who lived in poverty and suffered from joblessness and social exclusion in the first place and that it was necessary to address the root causes of the problem. On the question of increasing the percentage of women in political life, without the necessary political will it would be impossible to achieve that goal. She wondered in that connection whether the political parties had committed themselves to reforming their structures in order to ensure the attainment of that goal.

42. The minority groups in Paraguay needed not only individuals to represent them but also increased autonomy. Also, while it was important to reform existing laws, public awareness campaigns were also needed to combat domestic violence, which should be viewed with the same seriousness as other crimes. Lastly, in connection with the statistics provided, it was not enough for the delegation to report, for example, that four women ambassadors had been appointed. It was also important to know how many men had also been appointed during the same period and to provide comparative statistics so that an accurate picture could be obtained of the situation.

43. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** noted that there was a great deal of resistance to change from some sectors of Paraguayan society and that religion played a role in the perpetuation of inequalities between men and women. Paraguay had ratified the Convention, however, and its provisions therefore took precedence over national law and must be applied. Other countries, notably Costa Rica, which had faced similar challenges, had found solutions to their problems. Progress in promoting the participation of women in representational positions, such as in the National Assembly and on delegations to international meetings, had been modest, and she wondered what mechanisms had been put in place to facilitate such participation. In the case of representation in the National Assembly, temporary special measures, such as reserved seats and quotas, were perhaps necessary.

44. **Ms. Saiga**, while welcoming the ambitious proposal to increase the quota of women in the National Assembly, noted that the original quota of 20 per cent had not yet been achieved. She wondered what steps were being taken to ensure that the current quota was achieved and what the current status was of the legislation to increase the quota. She noted also that the political parties placed women at the bottom of their list of candidates. Perhaps some form of incentive, including tax incentives, should be offered for them to place women higher up on their lists.

45. **Ms. Gaspard** said that, given the social and cultural factors at play and the resistance by political parties to the existing law, temporary special measures were needed to increase the representation of women in the National Assembly. The solution adopted in her own country, France, was to alternate the names of men and women on lists of candidates.

46. **Ms. Dairiam** enquired as to the status of implementation of the national plan to promote equal opportunities for women. It should be remembered that quotas applied only to lists of candidates and did not guarantee actual seats in the Assembly. She wondered whether any measures were contemplated to guarantee seats for women. She also asked whether the national plan to promote equal opportunities for women addressed the need to increase the political participation of specific groups of women, such as Guaraní speakers.

47. **Ms. Argaña Mateu** (Paraguay) said that, while quotas were a mechanism for redressing a historic imbalance, the Electoral Code did not determine the place of women on lists of candidates. It was for the political parties to make that determination and, unfortunately, women were often placed at the bottom of the lists. There was therefore need for institutional reform and for incentives to encourage the political parties to increase the number of women candidates. In that connection, she welcomed the useful suggestions that the experts had made for achieving that goal.

48. **Ms. Ferreira de Lopez** (Paraguay) acknowledged that it might be virtually impossible under the current conditions to increase the quota of women in the National Assembly to 50 per cent. That target was open to negotiation, and it might be possible to agree on a new quota of 30 or 40 per cent. The efforts being made in that important area must be ongoing. The women who were currently members of the National Assembly had gotten there after a hard struggle. Her very presence on the podium as a member of the Paraguayan delegation, however, was an encouraging sign, since she was a member not of the Government but of an opposition party.

49. **Ms. Argaña Mateu** (Paraguay) said that her delegation had brought with it comprehensive data obtained from the 2002 national census, which would be presented by the members of her delegation.

50. **Ms. Sosa de Servin** (Paraguay) said that the census had provided reliable and updated data on the indigenous women of Paraguay, which would help to ensure that policies were based on the country's realities. Statistical information covering some 400 indigenous communities had been collected. The culture of those groups was based on the oral tradition, and the census had been the first effort to take stock of their lives.

51. **Ms. Ferreira de Lopez** (Paraguay) said that the Government was also concerned at the situation of indigenous women in Paraguay, many of whom had been expelled from their land and had been forced to migrate to the capital, where they prostituted themselves. The Commission on Indigenous Peoples had been established not only to study the problem of indigenous groups, but also to work with their leaders to identify solutions to the problems that they faced.

Articles 10 to 13

52. **Ms. Tan** asked whether the bilingual (Spanish/Guaraní) programmes that had been introduced into the educational system had succeeded in promoting the integration of the Guaraní-speaking population into the mainstream. The delegation had reported that only 5 per cent of the population lacked access to education, but the figures provided on page 10 of Paraguay's responses to the list of issues and questions (CEDAW/PSWG/2005/I/CRP.2/Add.5) showed a much higher overall illiteracy rate of 63 per cent. She would welcome clarification of that discrepancy.

53. **Mr. Flinterman** noted that students who were single mothers were subject to summary dismissal from their school and asked whether the rights of pregnant students were protected under the Labour Code, whether women were generally aware of that fact and whether other measures were in place to protect such women. He expressed concern at the significant level of sexism in the educational curriculum and stressed the urgent need for gender awareness training and for an end to discrimination in textbooks and teaching materials. It would be helpful to have more information on the measures that had been taken in that area.

54. **Ms. Popescu** said that in its next report Paraguay should provide information on the programmes and policies that had been developed to put an end to discrimination against women and to sexist cultural patterns. She was particularly concerned at the sexual harassment of girls in schools and would welcome information on the steps that were being taken, including gender awareness training for boys and teachers, to put an end to such harassment. It would also be useful to have information on the number of complaints of sexual harassment in schools, the procedures in place to address such complaints, and the measures taken to prevent the stigmatization of victims. Sexual harassment was a complex

phenomenon that was due mainly to sexist stereotypes, and it had very serious consequences for the future of the society.

55. **Ms. Šimonović** expressed concern at the high overall illiteracy rate and asked what steps were being taken to reduce the rate. She was also concerned at the violation of the rights of single women teachers, who were subject to dismissal, should they become pregnant.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.